

NAME .....

TEACHER/SECTION .....

DATE .....

## ACTIVITY

**1**

### Dissecting an Owl Pellet

#### What you need

(Per group)

Forceps  
Gloves  
Marking pen  
Newspaper  
Owl pellet, wrapped in aluminum foil  
Paper plate  
Plastic bag, self-sealing  
Probe, sharp  
*Visual Guide to Owl Pellet Prey*

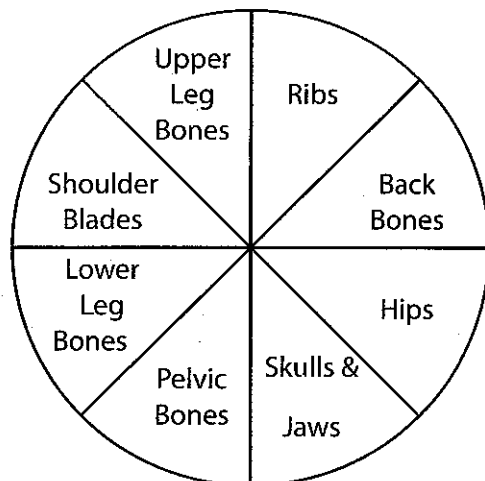
#### What to do...

In Activity 1 you will recover bones from various prey animals. In many cases, a single pellet from a given owl may contain bones from multiple types of prey.

**SAFETY:** Put on gloves and a lab apron or smock. Do not touch your hands to your face or mouth during this activity.

#### Step 1

Use a marking pen to label the edge of a paper plate with the names of the students in your group. Create a labeled "Prey Plate" having pie-shaped areas on as illustrated below:



#### Step 2

Place the owl pellet in the center of the newspaper cover sheet. Carefully unwrap the aluminum foil from the pellet.

## NEO/SCI STUDENT'S GUIDE

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### Step 3

Use a sharp probe and forceps to break apart the owl pellet. Be especially careful to not damage small bones as you work.

### Step 4

As each bone is uncovered, carefully use the sharp probe to help you remove hair and other debris. Place the bone on the "Prey Plate" in its correct group. Use the *Visual Guide to Owl Pellet Prey* as an aid in identifying bone types. Be alert! You may have more than a single prey organism in your pellet.

Undigested insects, such as beetles, pill bugs and other forms may have invaded the pellet before it was collected. Do not count them as prey.

### Step 5

Your teacher may direct you to proceed directly to the next activity, "Identifying Owl Prey." If there is to be a break in the lab activity, carefully place the "Prey Plate" inside a sealable plastic bag for later work. Wash your hands before leaving the laboratory.

## Investigating Food Webs with Owl Pellets